

**Remarks of U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Merten  
Commemorating the Fourth of July  
Friday, July 8, 2011**

Good evening, and thank you for coming today, July 8<sup>th</sup>, to celebrate our July 4<sup>th</sup> national holiday, the birth of our American nation. It was on that date, July 4, 1776, that the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. While American independence seems pre-ordained in hindsight, the 56 men who signed that document did so in a time of great uncertainty, as the rebellion against the British crown was at that point barely a year old. But they stepped forward, risking their lives, livelihoods, and property by publicly declaring independence from Great Britain, one of the most powerful countries in the world, and its king.

And since that time, it has been a day of festivities for all Americans, the celebration of summer. Bonfires, parades, concerts, and public readings of the declaration marked the first commemorations, which took place even as the Revolutionary War raged on. It was also a reason for celebration. In 1778, George Washington marked the day by issuing double rations of rum for all soldiers. Staging the first-ever Fourth of July celebration west of the Mississippi River in 1804, explorers Lewis and Clark continued that theme and ordered extra whiskey for their men. Leisure activities have diversified since then, and for Americans, July 4<sup>th</sup> means family get-togethers, barbecues, and fireworks.

And that is what I wanted for the entire embassy team, who have been working so hard over the last year: to spend July 4 *comme il faut*, relaxing with friends and family. That is why we are having this celebration today, the 8<sup>th</sup>. I thought that would be better than ordering extra whiskey for everybody.....

The Americans who work here at the embassy in Haiti come from all parts of our country, and from many different backgrounds, and they work for variety of government agencies. There are doctors, military officers, diplomats, and development experts. But we share at least two things. One is that we are patriots. We love the United States and we are very proud to serve our country by working for our government.

The second thing we share is a commitment to Haiti. All of us live and breathe Haiti, and we spend each day working with you to help your country realize its potential. Whether it is supporting the cadets at the Haitian National Police academy, working with farmers to increase the yield of their crops, bringing together American and Haitian athletes, or making connections between

businesspeople trying to invest in Haiti, our efforts are coordinated and focused toward that better Haiti each of us can see. We know that the road is long, but we can get there.

Since our smaller ceremony of last year a lot has happened. I am proud of the partnership we Americans – not just from the Embassy, but from the private and NGO sectors too – have shown our Haitian hosts this past year. We have helped you begin the process of rebuilding in the earthquake zone, confront a cholera outbreak, and prepare for and deal with a hurricane. One of the things I am most proud of is our partnership with Haitians who were interested in fair elections. We stood shoulder to shoulder with those Haitians who wanted their voice to be heard and their vote to count. We continue to stand with President Martelly and the Haitian parliament so that Haiti develops and flourishes. We want Haiti, our neighbor and partner, to succeed.

I want to point out that we have representatives from American companies and NGO's here behind me. They are here to show you what they are doing to represent America and to help Haiti become more prosperous. Please stop by and have a look at what they are doing.

[In Creole] I want to thank all of you for coming. You are our partners, and friends. God bless you, God bless Haiti, and God bless the United States of America.